

## SEVENTY YEARS IN IOWA

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Memoranda by Prof. Frank I. Herriott of an interview with Mrs. Robert Miller Haines (Joanna Harris Haines), mother of Mary Haines Herriott (Mrs. Frank I. Herriott), a graduate of Iowa College, now Grinnell college, of the class of 1865, a resident of Grinnell since 1855, and of Iowa since 1852, in the eighty-first year of her life, at Des Moines, Iowa, January 2, 4, and 6, 1928.

Yes, my recollections of those early days in Lee county between 1852 and 1855 and of my coming to Grinnell in 1855 are still vivid. I was born November 24, 1843, on a farm near Harrisville in Butler county in northwestern Pennsylvania. The hamlet, or village, was named for my grandfather, Ephraim Harris. My father, James Harris, was what we would call today a well-to-do citizen. Besides his farm he was very much interested in the promotion of a smelting furnace. The high price of iron was his undoing just as the high price of food stuffs during the late World war was the undoing of so many Iowans in the last ten years. He extended too much and then mortgaged his farm to secure a note for a relative. The fall of prices following the Mexican war and the general depression ensuing was too much for him. He lost his holdings and decided to seek his fortunes in Iowa, tales of which were most alluring.

One fact I may note before coming to the journey west. Whenever it rained it was observed that all the pools of water about my father's furnace were covered with oil or tinged with the iridescent hues thereof. Back on the farm was what we called the "bog ore spring," to which people came from miles around to drink of its oily water believing it had a beneficial effect. Soon after we left for Iowa, on the site of my father's smelting furnace, was discovered one of the great oil wells—a gusher I believe they would call it now. I recall a philosophical remark of my father's about our leaving that fortune behind us. He said that probably we were better for not having it for the children of many of those who struck oil were spoiled by the inrush of unexpected and unappreciated wealth. He never bemoaned the loss of the farm and its incalculable riches.

My brother, McKee, had come to Iowa in 1851 and his letters home had been so enthusiastic that my father and mother had no doubts as to whither they should journey when the financial disaster compelled them to give up the old farm. They, with my three brothers, Ephraim, James, and William J. and three sisters, Susan, Jenny, Mary, and myself started for Iowa in the forepart of 1852, going virtually all the way by river boats: first down the Allegheny to Pittsburgh; thence down the Ohio river on the steamboat, "The Diadem" to Cairo; thence on the "New Englander" up the Mississippi to Keokuk.

For reasons of economy we took what was called the deck passage. One incident I recall vividly. Although but nine years old I could sing fairly well and was much given to it when by myself. My father and mother were very ardent not to say radical abolitionists. Many of my songs reflected their prejudices and public views on the heated subject of slavery. My singing soon attracted attention and I was asked to sing by the passengers. I sang the songs with which I was most familiar and one afternoon I sang the following words to the tune "Susannah Don't You Cry".

I'm on my way to Canada  
That cold and dreary land.  
The dire effects of slavery  
I can no longer stand.  
My soul is vexed within me so  
To think I am a slave.  
I'm now resolved to strike the blow  
For freedom or the grave.

I was utterly innocent of the sorry significance of the song on board an Ohio river steamboat, with Kentucky always to the south of us and citizens of that state and other slave states farther south among the passengers. All of the anti-slavery passengers applauded my childish performance, but that song led to a rumpus. The southerners protested in no uncertain terms to the management. My mother soon sensed the situation and told me not to respond any more to requests to sing. I can appreciate now what trouble I might have incited.

Few other events of the trip remain with me. One other incident I recall however. As we were nearing the end of our journey I remember my father looking over toward the Illinois side and pointing out the town of Nauvoo and saying to my mother in tones that imported horror and reprobation, "That is the place where the Mormons live." He dwelt on some of the then recent events which had shocked the country: the riot which led to the assassination of the Mormon leader, Joseph Smith. I had no idea of what was involved, but I got the impression that they were some sort of terrible wild animals which were very dangerous.

#### EARLY IMPRESSIONS OF IOWA

My impressions and those of my parents of the country and the people in Lee county were somewhat mixed. We settled on the western side of Lee county close to the then notorious "Half-Breed Tract."\* We had lived on a rough,

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\*An extract from a letter to Frank I. Herriott from William J. Harris dated May 4, 1929 at 2739 East Third Street, Long Beach, California:

"In the early spring of 1852 my father and mother with seven of their children took the boat at Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, and came to Keokuk, Iowa, and settled on a farm twenty miles west of Keokuk. The building on the farm was a large log house with two rooms, one down on the ground floor with a large fire-place and an iron crane that swung in and out over the fire to hang kettles on for cooking. For baking they used a dutch oven which consisted of a flat-bottomed kettle with an iron lid. The kettle was set over hot coals and the lid was covered with the same. Outside the house we had a brick oven for baking bread. We were there three years without a stove of any kind. This was very different from what my mother had been used to as she had lived all of her married life up to time we left Harrisville in an eightroom house well furnished with all of the conveniences that were known at that time. My father went security for one of his brothers-in-law and lost all of his property. My mother's father, Judge McKee, gave her one thousand dollars and that with what little was saved out of the wreck brought us out west.

"Our neighbors in Lee county were all classes of people. Ralph Millard, the party from whom my father rented the farm, was a real shrewd Yankee with intelligence and business ability. There were others that cared for little outside of enough to eat, drink, and smoke, and lived largely by trapping as there were all kinds of game in the timber at that time. There were some from Missouri and they used a darcy dialect which amused us children very much.

"Our farming was done with a yoke of oxen to a small plow and then harrowed with a V-shaped harrow and then sowed to wheat or oats by broadcasting them by hand from a pail carried on the arm. Sacks of wheat were distributed through the field to refill the pails. When ready for harvesting it was cradled by hand and thrown in swath and raked with a hand rake into bundles and tied with bands made from straw. At that time we had only a chaff piler for thrashing the grain which did not separate the grain from the chaff. After this the grain had to be run through a fanning mill turned by hand. Sometimes we thrashed our small grain by tramping it out with horses on the barn floor and then running it through the fanning mill.

"In planting corn the ground was prepared and made very smooth and then marked in squares with a wooden marker three feet and nine inches apart. The corn was then dropped by hand and covered by hand with a hoe. It was cultivated with a horse hitched to a single shovel plow. Father held the plow and I rode the horse to keep him between the rows.

"The small church building and schoolhouse that we attended was located a mile and a half from where we lived and the walk of three miles a day, a part of the time through snow from one to two feet in depth kept us strong and healthy with a good appetite for mush and milk."

hilly farm in Pennsylvania, the land of which was not very fertile. We had heard so much of the beautiful prairies of Iowa and their amazing fertility, but we found this country hilly and wooded and its roughness was not more attractive than the region from which we had come. My own disappointment was quite pronounced and I did not get over it until I came to Grinnell three years later. There were none of the vast open stretches of which we had been told. But there were bronze wild turkeys, prairie chickens, and quail which my brother brought home for my mother to cook for all of us to enjoy.

The people seemed strange to us, many of them even queer. Our neighbors as I recall them were either New Englanders or southerners. The latter were more numerous and controlled local affairs. The intense abolitionism of my parents tended to alienate us and to enhance our sense of loneliness.

My father and mother had been old school Presbyterians. When the discussion of slavery became acute in the 40's they left that church because of its attitude toward the question and joined the Free Presbyterians. They found no church of choice in Lee county. They would have joined the Congregational church of their New England neighbors, but their stout consciences and stiff notions of rectitude on the subject in controversy would not allow them to do so. The Congregationalists were patronized, if not financially assisted, by the American Tract society and that body would not publish any anti-slavery tracts, or in any manner give its countenance to the anti-slavery agitation.

It was not long before my father's strong views were well known and of course the southerners looked askance at him and the whole family and this increased our sense of isolation. My father did not then engage in any open or offensive agitation of the slavery question, but our home was the gathering place for abolitionists and this fact did not increase the good-will shown to us. I can remember my father and two of my sisters going to Salem

in Henry county to an anti-slavery convention that aroused a great deal of interest in the family. I believe it was in 1853.

Another bright memory that does not fade is connected with Lee county. It was in our first home in Iowa that I read "Uncle Tom's Cabin". We took the *National Era* in which the story first appeared. I looked forward to each issue of the paper with an intense interest that surpassed any I have experienced since. I was so eager to get the paper from the carrier that I would go down the road to meet him as he brought the mail. If I was lucky in getting the longed-for chapter I would go off in the woods near the old home to read its fascinating chapters before anyone could interrupt. If I was not forehanded, I was alert to get it when it was laid down and I would hie myself to the loft to read it undisturbed.

The presidential campaign of 1852 made little impression on my mind, save that following my father's views I had little interest in either of the two major parties because of their opposition to radical anti-slavery propaganda. I recall a meeting at our house at which a Wesleyan Methodist preacher, a Mr. Whitten, said without any sort of reservation, "I never trust a Whig".

#### NO HARDSHIPS EXPERIENCED

In a general way we suffered none of the distress, privations and misfortunes portrayed in that story of the Dakotas thirty or forty years ago, Rolvaag's "Giants of the Earth". We lived in a log cabin of course, but we were always comfortable. We were poor as we measure worldly possessions today. One thing, however, mother always had plentiful supplies of bedding and no matter how cold the wintry nights might be, we were always warm. One matter you might be interested in, the women of the family always slept on the first floor of the cabin and the men in the upper part. This practice was due, I presume, in part to the needs of the young children. In the order of things today it would be reversed.

A characteristic or trait of my parents I want to leave on record. Although my father suffered sorry financial disaster in connection with his ventures in Pennsylvania and endured many privations of comforts, not to say luxuries, which he and my mother had been used to, during all those first years in Lee county and later in Poweshiek county I never heard either one of them, singly or together, bemoan their financial reverses or complain about the hard turns of fortune they had borne. At the table or about the fireplace, or after they had retired at night, usually their conversation was about the traffic in alcoholic intoxicants or the rights of women. We had much plain living to be sure, but we had with it always much high thinking and wholesome discussion. These memories I hold as my precious heritage.

One of the interesting experiences in Lee county was our relation to the New Englanders. Between our place and Warren was a Congregational church. The pastor was Mr. Danforth Bliss. He came to see us and wanted us to join his church as there was no Presbyterian church within reach. He was much disappointed that the strict views of my parents prevented, but it made no difference in his good-will and graciousness to us. He was a man of beautiful spirit and a person of wide influence for good in our community. His church was not strongly supported and received much of its support from people back in New England.

Another fine influence in my girlhood was a young schoolteacher, another New Englander, a Miss Allen. She was one of the many teachers sent out from New England by Governor Slade of Vermont. She was a beautiful woman and a wonderful teacher, a graduate of Mt. Holyoke. The natives stood in awe of her. Whatever may have been the traditions as to mischief and tricks, they were never tried upon her in her administration of the school. She easily dominated the entire situation. She married a Mr. Scoville, another New Englander of marked refinement.

The southerners among whom we lived seemed very queer to us. Their customs and manners and speech were strange to us. They were kind and neighborly if we or anyone encountered ill-fortune, but for reasons I have mentioned we had very little to do with them.

#### SOUGHT BETTER LAND

My father's discontent with the character of the land, the rough, hilly country, and the additional fact that he was living on rented land made him begin to look about for a better location. He wanted prairie land that he could cultivate more extensively and more easily. By good fortune he read one day in 1854 the advertisement or announcement of the plans of J. B. Grinnell for the planting of a colony in north-central and eastern Iowa. A church and a school of high learning were to be established and anti-slavery principles were to be maintained. I cannot tell now whether he read it in the *National Era* or the *New York Independent*, which he may have come upon in the home of Reverend Nichols. As soon as he read the prospectus, father exclaimed, "That's the place for me".

My father and brother Samuel went up to Grinnell in the fall of 1854 to examine its prospects and, if satisfied with the outlook, to purchase a farm as circumstances might suggest. My father decided to buy of Mr. Grinnell eighty acres at \$4.00 per acre, a mile west of the north line of Grinnell. My father returned to Lee county and my brother remained to prepare for our coming in the spring. He was a carpenter and built a shack for us on the corner of West street and Fifth avenue. He had it ready for us when we arrived.

We left early in the spring of 1855, or late winter, for snow was still on the ground when we started. There were ten of us, my parents, my oldest brother Ephraim and his wife, Rachel Hanlin, my two brothers, James and William J. and my three sisters, Susan, Jennie, Mary, and myself. We travelled in two covered wagons drawn by yokes of oxen, and in a two-seated buggy drawn by two

spirited horses of which my father was very proud, and which were mettlesome and hard to hold, for they were in excellent condition. The weather was very cold and we had to travel with care, for my mother was suffering from a severe attack of lumbago. Save mother's distress, we enjoyed the journey. We had plenty of warm clothing and we stopped along the way at several places, among them Bonaparte and Agency City. At night the men slept in the wagons while mother and the girls put up at hotels, or taverns as they were called. The spirited horses were hard to hold and when we were entering Grinnell, notwithstanding the long tiresome day they had had, those horses went prancing along the prairie road and up to the Chambers House where we were given a warm welcome. I can still see Abbie Whitcomb, later Mrs. Horace Robbins, who welcomed us, and her sister Helen, looking from the window as our horses trotted up to the front door of the hotel.

This journey to Grinnell gave me the fulfillment of my dreams of the prairies. In 1855 there was not a tree within three miles of Grinnell. We could see for miles and all my longings for vast open spaces were satisfied. The selection of the town site, we were told, was due to Mr. Grinnell's inside information that the managers of the Rock Island railroad, then called the M & M, was to locate a station at this point.

Another thing I shall remember as long as I live with unalloyed and inexpressible pleasure was the magnificence of the wild flowers that made the prairies for miles in all directions one gorgeous mass of variant beauty. I simply cannot adequately describe it. Some three years ago I was asked to tell of my pioneer experiences to the Kiwanis club of Grinnell. I indulged in what must have seemed to the present generation utter extravagance in adjectives and I felt they would suspect me of mere exuberance. But several whose memories went back to the same days, either in Grinnell or in other parts of the state, assured me that I had not misrepresented the facts and that I could scarcely overdraw the astonishing beauty



and profusion of the prairie flowers. As one looked over the stretches of the prairies, he must have been made of stone not to have been thrilled by the loveliness of it all. I cannot now name any number of species, but purple and yellow blossoms, wild roses and sweet williams were conspicuous among them.

#### INTEREST IN LIFE ON IOWA PRAIRIE

I learned to appreciate the extraordinary richness of the soil about Grinnell. My father came from Lee county well supplied with the latest farm implements, among them a breaking plow. He was soon in demand to break the heavy sod of the prairie. One part of the plow interested me and everyone else. In front of the plowshare and attached to the beam was a sharp knife blade reaching to the point of the share which was to cut the sod ahead of the share, thus insuring a clean cut line in the turnover and reducing the strain on the plow and the oxen pulling the plow. This plow was a matter of no little curiosity to the other residents as one of the new devices for agriculture. Because of its efficiency my father was asked to do, and did do, most of the first breaking of the prairie around about Grinnell in the next two or three years after our arrival. The extraordinary richness of the soil was a matter of constant astonishment and delight to my father. As you know it was almost coal black and as the plow turned the sod over, I recall how my father would exclaim time and time again, "How rich this is", and compare it with the poor farm land we tilled back in Pennsylvania.

Our method of planting corn and potatoes may be of interest. One of my brothers or sisters or I would follow the plow and drop the seed corn or potatoes at regular intervals and the next time around the plow turned another furrow over and so covered the seed. Was it hard work? Not to me. The new farm life was a constant delight.

One childish horror I suffered—and not exactly childish either—came from the innumerable snakes that in-

fested the prairies. We encountered them in all directions, and there were some very dangerous kinds such as rattlers and copperheads. My brother Will kept us in a state of terror from his irrepressible habit of killing them in a reckless manner. He was constantly doing it. His method was not with sticks or stones but by picking them up by the tails and snapping their heads off. How he could do it and how he did it so skillfully I never could understand, but he would even though my father rebuked him time and time again for his recklessness and forbade him doing it. But he brought the rattles into the house by the score.

My recollections of our first days in Grinnell prior to the Civil war cluster about several persons or incidents: first, the founder of the town, Mr. Grinnell, and the character of the people we found there or who came soon after; second, Professor and Mrs. L. F. Parker and the education I received under their teaching and the ideals they exemplified; third, the coming of Iowa college and its trustees, faculty and students; fourth, the movement for the abolition of slavery and John Brown's journey through Grinnell and conferences with those in sympathy with his program; and fifth, the onset of the Civil war and its frightful disturbance of the ongoing and progress of our peaceful life.

Each of these phases of our life constitutes a story in itself and I can give you only hints and glimpses of what actually occurred, or suggest the variant phases of the influences which remain in my memory. They are typical of the best in the beginnings of Grinnell and in the beginnings of the state. Time has worked many changes and I necessarily see many of those events through memories colored by prejudices, or marked predilections, and I hope none will ascribe to me arrogant or false assertion.

#### APPRECIATION OF FELLOW TOWNSMEN

I had all the natural pride of an American. I became possessed early with the pronounced opinion that Grinnell was a very fine place in which to live and that her

people were as good, or if you must have it, a little better than the average. I have since learned that there were many other communities in the state made of people precisely like my fellow townsmen of Grinnell whose culture, public spirit in public affairs and philanthropy and private and public morals were the same as ours. One does not live as long as I have and not discover that virtually all people, no matter whence they may hail are very much the same at heart in public purpose and private virtue.

The most significant fact about Grinnell in contrast with my first home in Iowa was the predominance of New Englanders. Their ideas and ideals prevailed, but intermixed with these were emigrants from the middle states and a few southerners. In contrast with this was the fact that in the country a few miles west and south and east of town were settlers who came largely from the south, or from the states of Pennsylvania, Ohio, Indiana, and Illinois. The difference in habits, customs and speech were pronounced and interesting. Each group was "odd" or "queer" to the others, and how we laughed at the speech and ways of some of them. The New Englanders came with better schooling and higher educational ideals than those of us from the western states and in our hearts we admitted the fact, but we never got used to some of their odd phrases. Their "I want to know", "Twant so" and "Do tell" always amused me. Their nasal twang and some of their pronunciations always made us smile. Such as "idear", "caows" and "hoss".

One experience has remained bright in my memory. I was playing with one of my best girl friends about a cherry tree in the spring. I told her with pride that I had "clum" that tree. Whereupon with a reproving manner she said, "You clim the tree". We squabbled for some time as to which was correct, but in time we learned that we were both wrong.

We noticed that the New Englanders were sharper in trade and in making bargains than were the people from other parts. They were keen and shrewd. My father was a kindly man and seldom given to caustic comments,

but he frequently characterized them as "blue-bellied Yankees", and never felt quite comfortable in dealing with some of them; though he was never mistreated as far as I can recall. He felt that he had to keep his wits at their best in dealing with them and he did not like it.

The few southerners always interested us. One fine family, the Hayes, came with their emancipated servant whom we all knew as "Uncle Ned". We were impressed by their always treating Uncle Ned with such consideration. They were very kind to him and he repaid them. Their slow, drawling southern speech was very charming. I always liked to hear them talk. There was a softness in their tones and enunciation which was pleasing to our ears. I cannot say so much for the speech of the mountain whites and the Hoosiers who were numerous in the township about Grinnell.

#### PERSONALITY OF J. B. GRINNELL

The central figure and the most interesting personality was, of course, the founder of the town, Josiah B. Grinnell. He was a man of marked ability. He was alert, energetic, quick in his actions and thinking, and incessantly active in the furtherance of his many and varied interests. He exemplified and summed up all the characteristics of a founder and promoter of a western town. Including in his program a rather elaborate and extensive scheme for the moral improvement, educational advancement and social uplift of those he sought to attract to Grinnell, his project linked at least two of the great subjects of national debate, slavery and the suppression of the liquor traffic. Because of this we became more self-conscious and contentious than we would otherwise have been.

Mr. Grinnell was the life of every social gathering. He was witty and quick at repartee. He had a fund of good stories and told them well. Whether this was because of his exuberant nature or a part of his desire to make people glad that they were in Grinnell I will not

undertake to say. But I recall that as a child I was constantly watching him to see what he would do or say next for I knew that we would have a good laugh at some turn he would take.

As a public speaker he was very successful. His advocacy of the restriction or elimination of the evils of slavery was invariably interesting and at times thrilling, especially when fugitive slaves were a matter of local concern, or when the horrors of the struggle in Kansas were uppermost, or the last days of John Brown. He knew how to touch the quick of human feelings. His political opponents found him a hard one to encounter in debate. He was much sought after in campaigns prior to the Civil war and later, as his career in congress may suggest.

I recall an example of Mr. Grinnell's sagacity in scoring points in any project he was pushing—and he was always promoting some plan or other. One of the strong characters among the first settlers was Henry M. Hamilton. He and Mr. Grinnell did not pull together in their plans. Their differences were accentuated because Mr. Hamilton owned land south of the present line of the Rock Island while Mr. Grinnell's holdings were largely to the north. Mr. Hamilton, by shrewdness or by luck, got business developments, two stores, built on his side of the dividing line and this seemed to be the probable course of business, much to the chagrin of Mr. Grinnell. He offered several counter inducements but none seemed potent until he persuaded the trustees of Iowa college, then at Davenport and seeking a better or more congenial location, to come to Grinnell. He offered them as a gift twenty acres which were accepted as the college campus. With the coming of the college the tide of public interest turned and the trade began to turn north of the median line. Another item in his strategy was his gift of the present park which constitutes what in many Iowa towns is called the public square.

With the founder of the town I recall with more feeling his good wife, Mrs. Grinnell. The two were an in-

teresting contrast. He was exuberant, vocal, and congenial, a hail-fellow-well-met always. She was reticent, serious, even severe in mein and manners and gave the impression of sternness at first. But with all her sadness of manner and restraint in words, Mrs. Grinnell is one of the bright lights of my girlhood and my later womanhood. She was very kind in doing little things that make life easier for children and neighbors. I shall never forget her gift to us of a bag of apples, the first we had in Grinnell. A kind of fruit we so longed for and could not obtain.

#### GRINNELL AS AN EDUCATIONAL CENTER

Among the attractions of the town to my father and mother was the announcement of the plans for schools. These were first, the common or what is now called the grade and high schools, and second in Mr. Grinnell's forecast was a university. I recall caustic comments on the extensiveness of the undertaking. Fortunately the coming of Iowa college put a stop to the talk of a university. Our first school was taught by two New England women, Miss Lucy Bixby, and then by her sister, Miss Louise.

The coming of Mr. and Mrs. L. F. Parker was a happy incident in the promotion of Grinnell as an educational center. Prior to that we had done well, but when he began his work in 1856 everything changed and a new era was inaugurated. He was a graduate of Oberlin which to my youthful mind was the radiant center of all that was best. Readers of Edward Eggleston's *Hoosier Schoolmaster* know that the pioneer schools followed a simple treadmill routine in reading, writing, and arithmetic. Professor Parker, as we called him even then, changed all that. He made us eager to learn because he made us realize that knowledge was the means of introducing us to the larger life of the world about us and to the significance of the history of the world. Recitations were not a dull round of repeating what we had memorized. He illuminated the schoolroom and made our lessons vital. They related to life and they made us see that we were

individuals and how we might play a part in the progress of better things.

Mrs. Parker was then and ever after one of the most beautiful women I have ever seen. Her brown eyes and gentle ways and gracious manner of addressing young and old alike gave her remarkable influence. Professor Parker was more vigorous and electric in his work and she complemented him in the most telling way. They gave a distinction to the educational life of the community that constituted a most important part in Grinnell's fame.

It was due to Mr. Cooper, later Colonel Cooper, that Professor and Mrs. Parker came to Grinnell. He had known of them at Oberlin and their noteworthy success in teaching. Professor Parker wanted to settle in "bleeding Kansas", as we called it in anti-slavery circles, and went there to find a suitable location. Not finding just what he desired he stopped in Grinnell as he had promised and stayed.

The beginning of Iowa college, or Grinnell college as we now call it, constitutes a story by itself. Mr. Grinnell had very ambitious plans for the establishment of Grinnell university. It was incorporated as such and Mr. Grinnell was president of the board of trustees. As originally conceived the university was to consist of two seminaries or schools. One was to be located on what is the present campus and was to be for the young women. The other, for young men, was to be located in the southern part of the town, south of the present Rock Island railroad at a "safe distance" from the female seminary as the speech of those days put it. Mr. Grinnell gave twenty acres and further, as a part of his plan for establishing the university, he offered to give the proceeds of the sale of certain portions of the lots which he sold to settlers to provide a working capital or the beginning of an endowment fund. A wooden building was erected on the present site of Alumni hall, (registration building).

Why was not Professor Parker made president of the university and later of Iowa college when it came to Grinnell? The answer to this question involves one of the most interesting phases of our life. While we were in fact an anti-slavery community, there were sharp differences among us as to the proper limits of agitation. Professor Parker was an "Oberlinite", and all such were looked upon by the general public as extremists and dangerous radicals. This was especially true in Iowa. Oberlin stood for abolitionism and women's rights, subjects of violent contempt in the minds of both men and women outside of the small circle of advocates for coeducation, and upon this too the majority looked with grave doubts as to its wisdom and propriety. It was common talk that Professor Parker was promised the presidency of Grinnell university, but Mr. Grinnell and others with whom he had to work soon realized that however much they might sympathize with the new thought and progressive ideas of the day, they had to reckon with the strong current of common opinion in outlying regions from which they hoped to draw popular support for the new and ambitious university. The great majority looked at our radical reforms, or innovations as they were often called, not only with disapproval but with dread, precisely as the public looks today on Bolshevism, Communism, and sundry sorts of Socialism. The people of Iowa in those days, as generally through her history, were conservative, and Mr. Grinnell and his associates soon clearly sensed this fact.

The matter of the presidency hung in the balance for several years. The Civil war kept the decision in suspense and finally Dr. George F. Magoun of Bowdoin was called. His attitude, while 'advanced' was not so extreme in popular estimate as was that of Professor Parker, the Oberlinite. The relations of these two men and Mr. Grinnell constitute a most interesting study in human relationships in the furtherance of public philanthropy. Both had pronounced feelings and striking traits of character. Each was possessed with keen mentality and phy-



sical vigor and in the strenuous discussions of those days their influence on the course of events was definite and at times emphatic. They added much to the zest and picturesqueness of life in the town and constituted the major elements in its distinction abroad.

#### JOHN BROWN'S VISITS

The visits of John Brown on two occasions gave to Grinnell fame, or infamy, according to one's views of his career and character. I saw and heard him on one of his trips, but was too young to appreciate the significance of his coming. When he came with the eleven negro slaves he had taken from their masters in Missouri, I saw and heard him. The town was all agog with excitement. Everyone knew he was there and there were many who did not approve of his high-handed method of invading Missouri and kidnapping the slaves. Though they abhorred slavery as an institution, they realized that promiscuous interference with the rights of the slave holders would bring on the horrors of slave insurrection and civil war would wreck the country's peace. Mr. R. M. Kellogg, an old-line Democrat, was outspoken against public sympathy with such invasion of public and private law. Brown spoke in the church where the stone church now stands. I do not recall much of what he said but he denounced the oppression inflicted upon him. I particularly remember the harsh features, the cold, relentless eye and hawklike look of the hero of the Ossawatamie. He kept men and children alike in a state of awe and in this fact, I suspect, lay much of his ability to do things that most men would not dare to try to do.

The next morning Brown stopped in front of the schoolhouse with his covered wagon and hailed Professor Parker who went out to talk to him. We youngsters knew as soon as our teacher left who was out in front and one of the pupils asked if we might not go too. Either because of his sympathy with us or because he appreciated that it was useless to insist that we remain in our seats and pursue our studies, Professor Parker consented. We

all scurried out and huddled about, a cluster of excited children, and saw the much talked of man sitting in the wagon seat holding the reins of the horses. Again that cold, stern eye held us in awe and silence. We were much excited to see a number of woolly heads and flashing black eyes and rows of white teeth greeting us through the cracks in the wagon cover where it had been lifted by some of the irrepressible pickaninnies crowded in the back of the wagon. We were all a tiptoe to see, and agog with suppressed excitement.

Because of my parents views on slavery we were among the conductors of the underground railway. It was a subject of little discussion, in fact, was not mentioned at the table or about the hearth. Father and mother frequently engaged in whispered conversations and we knew something was on, or up, as the phrase goes, but we were never told what it was. I believe it was not generally known that our house was a "station" because my parents were so reticent. We children knew it was a dangerous topic and talk of it might subject the family to arrest or attack and we instinctively said nothing.

One night when I came home I found a colored woman with a baby in her arms sitting by the fire. We heard mother and father whispering to one another and realized that preparations were being made. In the morning she and the baby were gone. My brother had taken them on their way. Needless to say all this gave a peculiarly exciting turn to life for us and made us all as alert as crickets to the course of public events, especially those relating to slavery.

The episode of the negro boy's education which so disturbed the peace of Grinnell was one in which my brother Ephraim was involved in no small measure. It sharply illustrates the curious phases and limitations of public and private feelings about the irrepressible negro questions. The public today is no different in such matters than it was in those exciting days.

My brother, Dr. Ephraim Harris, entered the army service as a regiment physician. In New Orleans he

became in some way interested in an attractive negro lad called James. How my brother took charge of him or felt concerned to help him I do not recall. But he brought him to Grinnell. His education became a matter of concern and he was sent to the town school. His appearance in the schoolroom precipitated another crisis. Grinnell had a number of New Englanders who were idealists and friends of humanity when thinking of far-away China, Africa, or South Carolina, but their zeal in good works cooled when the actualities came into town and next door. Several citizens protested against James being put in with their children in school. Some years before the exclusion of negroes had been sought under a resolution denying "foreigners" the privileges of schools but it had been voted down with a narrow margin. Two citizens, both from New England, Captain Clark, an old sea captain, and Mr. Kellogg, were leaders of those who came to school to protest. But Professor Parker announced in no uncertain terms that anyone who ventured to take the negro boy from the school must do it over his dead body. As previous experiences with the Oberlinites indicated what his assertion implied, the lad was left alone. Nothing came from the flare-up but smoke.

#### LINCOLN AND THE CIVIL WAR

Strangely I do not recall much about the political discussions preceding the election of Abraham Lincoln. My father and mother were so extreme in their views that they looked upon Lincoln with indifference, if not with positive suspicion. He did not attack slavery; he stood for the protection of the slave-holder's rights in his ownership of his slaves, even sustaining the Fugitive Slave Law. His opposition to the extension of slavery was not extreme enough for them. For years they had read the *Radical*, a paper of extreme anti-slavery views. Later it was called *Principia*. During the campaign of 1860 and in the forepart of the war it expressed most adverse opinions about Abraham Lincoln and had no respect for his program of "saving the union" regardless of the abo-

lition of slavery. It was not until a year after the beginning of the war that my father became convinced that the abolition of slavery was one of the inevitable results of the struggle and that Lincoln's course began to interest me. The proclamation emancipating the slaves, of course, changed everything for us. Lincoln became one of our fixed stars.

My recollections of the Civil war are not so clear as it seems they should be. Four of my brothers and my father enrolled in the army. My brothers, James, aged 23, and Samuel, aged 30, enlisted in Company B of the Fortieth Iowa Infantry, and served for three years. My oldest brother, Dr. Ephraim Harris, was associated with the same regiment as assistant surgeon but the major part of his service was in charge of a hospital given over to smallpox cases in New Orleans. My brother McKee also served. Their commanding officer was Colonel Cooper and they and my mother remembered gratefully his kindness and consideration. My youngest brother, William, was ordered into service, but because of my mother's need of his help with the farm he was released, and I sympathized with his disappointment.

My father's war experience was interesting. He was fifty-eight years old, beyond military age. He joined the famous "Greybeard Regiment" the Thirty-seventh Iowa Infantry, which was mustered into the national service on December 15, 1862 at Muscatine and mustered out at Davenport May 24, 1865. All of the members of the company were over forty-five years of age and were not subject to draft or other call of the government. The regiment saw considerable service of an important character at St. Louis and Franklin, Missouri, at Rock Island and Alton, Illinois, at Memphis, Tennessee, Indianapolis, and Columbus, Ohio. At Indianapolis and Columbus they guarded prison camps. My father enlisted because his conscience and earnest feelings about slavery compelled him. He was not much concerned at the outset because he felt that President Lincoln was not determined to abolish slavery. When it became clear that slavery was to

be abolished, he felt no doubt as to his duty to do all that he could to assist. The achievements of the regiment and their substantial service won high praise from their officers and the government.

Our work in college was, of course, completely disturbed by the outbreak of the Civil war. We felt the same intense feeling that surged in the public at large. One incident had much of the absurd and pathetic in it. It occurred at the outset of the war. The girls of the college, mostly of my class, made a flag, or perhaps they bought it, at any rate possessed one. When Stephen A. Douglas died soon after the war broke out, Mr. Kellogg, an ardent Douglas Democrat, asked that the flag be hung at half-mast in recognition of the fact, because of his prominence and because from the time of his defeat for the presidency he had earnestly urged the South not to secede, and both the North and the South to support the Union. We should have acceded to Mr. Kellogg's request readily, but we did not. Rather, we summarily refused to do so. Mr. Kellogg in some heat and precipitancy came to the college building where the flag was and undertook to lay hands upon it and himself carry out his purpose. He was anticipated and resisted by the boys. Some hot words passed and Mr. Kellogg had to abandon his plan. The next morning there was seen dangling from a tree in front of his home an effigy and attached thereto the ungracious words, "Empty barrels make the most noise". My neighbors never had much respect for college students after that. It was a silly performance. In the light of subsequent developments I know that we should have put aside our prejudices but we were such ardent youngsters, as most people are, that we could not forget that Douglas had tried to defeat Lincoln, that he started the repeal of the Missouri Compromise which we regarded as a sacred compact, and that he was a defender of slavery which we held indefensible.

Our college class work was more or less erratic just as work was disturbed in the World war, by constant excitement from news of the events, by our concern for our

loved ones facing the dangers at the front, and by the intermittent reports of victories and then of defeats with horrible destruction. Systematic and serious study was very difficult, or rather impossible.

All of the able-bodied men of the classes enlisted. James Ellis and Carl Kelsey of Grinnell, John Carney whose home was near by, Hiram Cardell of Malcolm, Joseph Lyman from west of town and W. S. Kennedy, a Quaker from Sugar Creek township; all of these went to the front. From my own class of 1865 three left: Henderson Herrick, Robert M. Haines and Charles Scott. Mr. Haines was a Quaker and was constrained by his own and his mother's views as to war, but he went into service of the Christian Sanitary Commission and served as a nurse at a hospital in St. Louis. Charles Scott's name revives memories of his hard struggle. He had to work for his living while in school. He was an excellent student, a strenuous worker, and died two years after graduation.

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### FAST TRAVELING

A gentleman of this place arrived yesterday morning on The Rolla having come up from New Orleans in ten days, less seven hours, including 27 hours spent in St. Louis. This is the quickest trip ever made on the Mississippi. He came on board the steamer St. Louis as far as St. Louis.—*Iowa News*, Dubuque, Wisconsin Territory, June 9, 1838.

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NOTICE! — Owing to the scarcity of cash, the subscriber will receive the following articles, viz: Corn, Oats, White Beans, Wood, Flour, Butter, Eggs, and Lard, at cash prices in payment of fee for recording. Fees in all cases to be paid in advance.

JOHN D. EVANS.

Recorder's Office, Feb, 21, 1842 2 w

An advertisement appearing in the *Dubuque News*, February 28, 1842.

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